

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 18008 300647Z

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SUBJECT: ARAFAT'S MOSCOW VISIT: SOVIET VIEWS ON PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

REF: A. MOSCOW 17846

B. CAIRO 9596

C. MOSCOW 17847

1. SUMMARY. ARAFAT'S RECEPTION BY KOSYGIN AND PONOMAREV NOVEMBER 27

AND BY GROMYKO NOVEMBER 28 ACCORDS THE PLO LEADER AND HIS

DELEGATION THE HIGHEST LEVEL RECEPTION HERE YET AND

APPARENTLY MOVES THE SOVIETS SOMEWHAT FURTHER ALONG

TOWARD FORMAL PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLO AS

THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS. HOWEVER,

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 18008 300647Z

SOVIET PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND POSITION, AS REFLECTED IN

THE PRESS, SUGGEST THAT CONSISTENT WITH RECENT SOVIET ATTITUDES, MOSCOW IS BOOSTING THE PLO EGO WITH GERERALIZED ACCLAIM FOR RECENT POLITICAL SUCCESSES WHILE DOING SOME FANCY FOOTWORK TO AVOID ANY PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO PLO EXTEME POSITIONS ON AN ME SETTLEMENT. ALTHORUGH THERE ARE RUMORS HERE THAT ONE RESULT OF ARAFAT'S VISIT MAY BE A SOVIET GREEN LIGHT FOR A PLO GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, MOST RECENT SOVIET VIEWS AVAILABLE TO US STILL INDICATE THAT MOSCOW REMAINS EVASIVE ABOUT ANY PRIOR COMMITMENT TO ARAFAT ON RECOGNITION OF A PLO EXILE REGIME.
END SUMMARY.

2. TASS REPORT OF ARAFAT MEETING WITH KOSYGIN AND PONOMAREV (PRAVDA, NOVEMBER 28) IS LARGELY DEVOTED TO SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS MADE BY KOSYGIN. ACCORDING TO TASS KOSYGIN-- ALONG LINES OF SOVIET STATEMENTS ON PALESTINIANS SINCE THE US RESOLUTION --EXPRESSED "GREAT SATISFACTION" AT THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT'S RECENT POLITICAL SUCCESSES AND AT THE "GROWING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE JUSTICE OF THE OBJECTIVES FOR WHICH THE PLO IS STRUGGLING." KOSYGIN APPARENTLY MADE NO MOEVEMNT FROM USUAL SOVIET POSITION ON A PALESTINIAN STATE, CONFIRMING ONLY SOVIET SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIANS' " STRUGGLE FOR THEIR OWN NATIONAL RIGHTS AND THEIR OWN STATEHOOD (GOSUDARSTVENNOT')." ARAFAT IS REPORTED ONLY AS HAVING EXPRESSED THANKS TO SOVIETS FOR SUPPORTING THE PALESTINIANS' STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN FATE.

3. REPORT OF ARAFAT MEETING WITH GROMYKO (PRAVDA, NOVEMBER 29) SAYS THAT TALKS DEALTH WITH THE ME AND A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM "WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A ME SETTLEMENT BASED ON SECURING THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE TO SELF-DETEREMINATION AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY." BUT ARTICLE DOES NOT ATTRIBUTE THIS FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM TO EITHER PARTY. ARTICLE GIVES A HINT THAT ONE OUTCOME OF THE CURRENT TALKS MAY BE OFFICIAL CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 18008 300647Z

SOVIET RECOGNITION OF THE PLO AS THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS BY REFERRING TO THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE "UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PLO."

4. FURTHER INDICATION ON PEACE FORMULAS WITH NEED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF PLO SENSITIVITIES IS REFLECTED IN THE DIFFENRENT TREATMENT ACCORDED ARAFAT'S INTERVIEW WITH TASS IN PRAVDA AND ON TASS ENGLISH WIRE (NOVEMBER 28).

PRAVDA VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW SUGGESTS THAT PLO LEADER EXPRESSED VIEWS CLOSER TO THOSE PUBLICLY HELD BY SOVIETS THAN WAS INDICATED IN TASS ENGLISH SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO PRAVDA, ARAFAT CHARACTERIZED AS A "STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF THE SOVIET" COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE A JUST ME PEACE" BREZHNEV'S ULAN BATOR SPEECH "IN WHICH HE STRESSED THAT THE ONLY RELIABLE PATH TOWARD PEACE IN THIS REGION IS THE TOTAL LIBERATION OF ALL ARAB LANDS OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND THE REALIZATION OF THE LEGITIMATE RIGHT OF THE ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE TO THE CREATION OF THEIR OWN STATEHOOD AND SELF-DETERMINATION." (REFTEL C) SAME PASSAGE ON TASS ENGLISH OPTS FOR VAGUER FORMULATION REFERRING ONLY TO "OCCUPIED ARAB LANDS" WITHOUT REFERENCE TO 1967 LIMITATION. SECOND MAJOR DIFFERENCE IN TREATMENT OF THE INTERVIEW IS OMISSION FROM ENGLISH TASS REPORT OF PASSAGE IN PRAVDA QUOTING ARAFAT AS SAYING SOVIETS' PRINCIPLED APPROACH TO ME "WAS DEMONSTRATED WITH COMPLETE FULLNESS DURING THE RECENT FOURTH SOVIET-AMERICAN SUMMIT NEAR VLADIVOSTOK."

5. ON THE QUESTION OF A PLO GOVERNMENT FRENCH TOLD US NOVEMBER 27 THAT MFA CHIEF NEAR EASTERN COUNTRIES DIVISION SYTENKO MADE A TRIP TO PARIS AT HIS REQUEST LAST WEEK (PRESUMABLY WEEK OF NOVEMBER 18) TO DISCUSS ME WITH QUAI OFFICIALS. ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF ME DEVELOPMENTS DISCUSSED WAS SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH, SYTENKO TOOK THE LINE WE HAVE HEARD HERE ON THIS ISSUE, SAYING THAT SOVIET RECOGNITION OF A PLO GOVERNMENT WOULD DEPEND ON ITS COMPOSITION AND ITS PROGRAM.

6. SYTENKO WAS ALSO VAGUE ON IDEAS ABOUT A PALESTINIAN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 MOSCOW 18008 300647Z

STATE WITH THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR, WHO SAW HIM NOVEMBER 26. WHEN SYTENKO WAS ASKED WHEN THE SOVIETS WILL TURN THEIR REFERENCES TO PALESTINIAN "STATEHOOD" (GOSUDARSTVENNOST) INTO ALLUSIONS TO A "STATE" HE GAVE NO DIRECT ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION, BUT SAID GOSUDARSTVENNOST' REFERRRED TO "SOMETHING LIKE THE NATIONAL HOME YOU (THE BRITISH) USED TO SAY THE JEWS NEEDED."

7. COMMENT: SYTENKO'S REPORTED TENTATIVE POSITION ON A PLO GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE IS CONSISTENT WITH OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE HAD HERE ABOUT SOVIET REFUSAL TO COMMIT THEMSELVES IN ADVANCE ON RECOGNITION OF A PLO GOVERNMENT. EGYPTIAN EMBOFF TOLD US NOVEMBER 27, HOWEVER, THAT HE BELIEVES ONE RESULT OF ARAFAT'S CURRENT TALKS HERE MAY BE OFFICIAL SOVIET SANCTION FOR

A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT, AND THAT PLO WILL SET UP A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE SHORTLY AFTER ARAFAT'S MOSCOW VISIT IF THE SOVIETS GIVE ASSURANCES OF RECOGNITION. OUR OWN VIEW, BASED ON PUBLIC INFORMATION AVAILABLE SO FAR ABOUT ARAFAT'S VISIT IS THAT SOVIETS ARE STILL TAKING A CAUTIOUS LINE WITH THE PLO. IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT, WITH RABAT AND THE UN RESOLUTIONS BEHIND THEM, MOSCOW MAY BE MOVING TOWARD A FULL RECOGNITION OF THE PLO AS THE "SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS," BUT ARAB REPORTS (REFTEL B) THAT MOSCOW WILL GO SO FAR AS A COMMITMENT TO RECOGNIZE A PLO EXILE GOVERNMENT SEEM LESS CERTAIN.

8. WE HEAR VIA THE EGYPTIANS, WHO HAVE TALKED TO ARAFAT, THAT THE PLO INFORMATION OFFICE HERE MAY BE GIVEN VIRTUAL DIPLOMATIC STATUS AND THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE PROMISED ARAFAT ARMS, "BUT ONLY FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES." STOESEL

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